
PROPOSED FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

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Urban Lot Fuels/Veg Management**

Finding: *(i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts)*

Fuels reduction treatments implemented on National Forest System urban intermix parcels within the Angora Fire reduced fire behavior from crown fire to surface fire as designed, even under the extreme fire weather conditions experienced on June 24, 2007.

Background and Supporting Evidence: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

The USDA-Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit manages small segments of urban forest, commonly referred to as urban lots or urban intermix lands; and that these lands were acquired to protect them from development and to protect water clarity for the purpose of preserving the hydrologic function of sensitive lands and conserving natural forest conditions within the urban setting. The Forest Service has completed initial fuels reduction treatments on 75% of the National Forest urban intermix parcels, with plans for completion by 2010. The Forest Service is implementing fuels reduction maintenance on post-initial treatments and is working with local fire districts to prioritize and implement these maintenance treatments.

Urban Intermix Lands (urban lots) consist mainly of parcels of land that have been acquired by purchase, donation, or other means, under authority of Public Law 96-586 (Santini-Burton Act) of December 23, 1980. The acquisition and management of environmentally sensitive lands authorized by Santini-Burton Act is often referred to as the urban lot program. Many of the acquisitions are small lots (less than 1 acre) in urban subdivisions.

The USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has been implementing fuels reduction treatments on National Forest System urban intermix parcels since 1995. The fuels reduction treatments being implemented are designed to (1) reduce the potential

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of catastrophic wildfire effects by making crown fires less likely, (2) improve defensible space protection to adjoining private lands; and (3) enhance forest ecosystem health.

The fuel treatments encountered during the Angora fire reduced ember production, and reduced heat and smoke allowing firefighters to be more effective. Treated urban intermix parcels served as fuel breaks, allowing firefighters to safely protect structures and slowing fire spread. Eye witness accounts, firefighter interviews and post fire on-site inspections indicated a significant reduction in fire intensity when fire entered treated urban lots (flame lengths were less than 4 feet). The exception was those lots on steep slopes that burned similar to areas without treatment.

Urban Lot Management Program Accomplishments since 1995:

- 1750 acres of hazardous fuels management has been completed. (2,400 urban lots and 4 miles of urban interface lands)
- 470 acres of re-entry (follow up) fuels and forest health treatments (730 urban lots)

Some larger urban forest parcels and additional urban interface lands have received fuels reduction treatments under other Forest Service fuels reduction projects.

Remaining Work and Maintenance of Fuels Treatments:

Of the roughly 3,200 urban intermix parcels managed by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), approximately 25% (670 parcels, 1,000 acres) remain requiring various degrees of initial fuels reduction treatment.

The Forest Service has developed a plan to finish initial treatment on all National Forest System urban intermix parcels and transition into a maintenance level program by 2010. In addition, the Forest Service is implementing maintenance fuels treatments on older treatments. This work is being coordinated with other projects being conducted by Fire Safe Chapters and local fire districts. In some cases the implementation of these maintenance treatments is being conducted by the local fire districts under a stewardship agreement. The Forest Service also implements a Fuels Reduction Stewardship program that allows adjoining property owners to implement maintenance fuels treatments on National Forest System lands.

The Forest Service is currently evaluating National Forest urban intermix parcels with SEZ conditions to determine where additional fuels treatments are needed. This evaluation has already been completed for the South Shore and SEZ treatments on National Forest urban intermix parcels are included in the South Shore Fuels Reduction Planning Project (planning expected to be completed late summer 2008).

National Forest Urban Intermix parcels – Angora Fire

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In August 2007, the report “An Assessment of Fuel Treatment Effects on Fire Behavior, Suppression Effectiveness, and Structure Ignition on the Angora Fire” (USDA R5-TP-025 August 2007) was published by the USDA-Forest Service. A copy of this report has been provided to the Commission. During the assessment described in this report, the Forest Service team evaluated 70 of the National Forest System urban intermix parcels. The report shows that overall; the treatments were successful at modifying fire behavior by reducing fire behavior from active crown fire to surface fire, reducing ember production, and reducing fire intensity. The report also indicates that fuels reduction treatments on steeper slopes were less effective and that untreated urban intermix parcels burned with crown fire intensity.

Of the 129 National Forest System urban parcels within the Angora Fire perimeter, only 2 showed crown fire intensity. One was an untreated parcel located north of the Mule Deer area, not located within the subdivision, but adjacent and upslope from the subdivision. The other parcel was a large parcel adjacent to the south of the Angora Highlands subdivision. A portion of this parcel was treated in 1994 as part of a CDF/Forest Service mastication demonstration project. Portions of this treatment area on steep slopes burned with crown fire intensity.

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

Recommendation #1A:

The treatment prescriptions that proved effective in the Angora Fire on National Forest System urban intermix parcels should continue to be utilized.

Recommendation #1B:

The Forest Service should consider more intensive treatments on steeper slopes where only pre-commercial thinning treatments are occurring. The current regulatory constraints should be revised to ensure implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation #2:

The Forest Service should continue implementing the current plan to have all urban intermix parcels treated by 2010. The Forest Service should continue to implement the plan for maintenance of fuels treatments on urban intermix parcels, including utilization of stewardship agreements with local fire districts and stewardship permits for local land owners.

Recommendation #3:

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The Forest Service should continue to coordinate fuels reduction treatments with state and local agencies as outlined in the Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy (10-Year Plan).

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

- ☐ Cost – cost associated with continuing current implementation of Forest Service urban forest restoration and fuels reduction projects to remain at current levels. Cost for to implement maintenance treatments should be substantially less than initial treatment costs.
- ☐ Funding source – Federal appropriations, Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act funding.
- ☐ Staffing – Forest Service staffing exist to implement recommendations.
- ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws – need to evaluate regulatory constraints on steep slopes.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency